



DISCHARGED
An Alternatives to Suicide Approach

Evaluating DISCHARGED Suicide Peer Support Groups

Theme 2 Summary: The Power of Peers

This sheet provides a summary of the second theme from the participant findings of our research project *Evaluating DISCHARGED Suicide Peer Support Groups*.

We did this project with Curtin University in 2019 to investigate people's experiences of DISCHARGED suicide peer support groups. We wanted to find out the impact they have on the people who attend them and how or if they are different from the clinical mental health system. The full report of our findings is available on our website.

To make our results easy to understand, we wrote a series of summary sheets. This is the second of three summaries that came from the interviews with participants.

The Power of Peers

In this theme participants said they felt accepted and understood by the peer facilitators in DISCHARGED groups. This helped them feel safe and comfortable to share about their suicidal thoughts. They told us this was different to their experiences in clinical services because they didn't have to worry about being judged by a clinician who didn't understand what it was like to be suicidal. There are three parts to this theme which are described below, two of which explored the experiences of our transgender (trans) participants.

- ***"It all comes back to being trans"*** - a participant summarising how clinicians tend to focus on their trans identity

We were told by participants that mental health services aren't safe for trans people. Participants said they have faced microaggressions, discrimination and clinicians who don't understand trans identities. This meant that participants then had to educate the clinicians who were meant to be supporting them (this is reported in other research studies as well). Some participants spoke about trying to stay safe in inpatient wards by hiding their trans identity, which often made them feel even worse.

- ***"You don't have to make others believe"*** - a participant reflecting on the experience of being trans in a DISCHARGED group

Our research shows that DISCHARGED respects and normalises trans identities. Having a group run by trans people, for trans people, helped participants be able to speak freely without needing to justify or explain their identity or pronouns.

- **Responsibility to group**

We heard from participants that sharing in a group about their suicidal thoughts made them feel less alone and like they belonged somewhere. Being part of the group created a sense of responsibility to other group members. Some participants spoke about attending the group, even when they were going ok, so that they could listen and bear witness to other people's stories. They knew that by being present and hearing what someone was going through, they were supporting their peers. Also, the idea of the impact their death could have on the others in the group was something that kept participants going during the harder times.